

Thursday, July 5, 2007

**T**he depiction of nature is one of the oldest and most romantic subjects in art. Almost every artist in history has created some image that includes natural forms. Landscapes – trees, plants, flowers, birds and animals – and still lifes are an accessible metaphor for the wonders of life around us.

At the Sue Greenwood Fine Art, Paul Brigham and Patrick LoCicero (pronounced Lo-Chi-cherro) have developed original styles to depict flowers in vases, foliage, birds, each in a distinct format, and each rendered exquisitely. Of note is how both artists deal with contrast. Brigham strives for the intersection of abstraction and realism; while LoCicero seeks to work with collage and paint, integrating them into one canvas. Brigham was raised in the East Coast and recalls the New England woods in his backyard where he developed a profound love of nature. His father had created a Japanese garden and placed Japanese prints around the house. A lover of Japanese art, Abstract Expressionism, and nature, Brigham, the artist, combines the three in his paintings. First, he develops a canvas in an abstract manner, building layers of color, turning



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the canvas on different sides and coming up with a nonrealistic, expressionistic composition. Brigham enjoys this improvisational stage, when the painting is raw and being formed. For him, it is thrilling to not know the direction the image will take and what will emerge.

Working abstractly, Brigham finds within layers of color and subtle textures, the possibility of a natural form, a single branch. He adds further imagery that pulls the canvas away from the modern and abstract and brings it to the figurative and timeless. Birds appear on branches, along with leaves, areas of color and natural objects in small rectangular patches characterized by stamps on ancient Japanese prints. Colors, too, add to the poetry of Brigham's art. His palette is muted with earth tones, as if each canvas has been aged with time. Recently, the artist introduced silk screen to areas of the canvas. This makes Brigham's art increasingly more lyrical with enigmatic

scenes that evoke memories of far off places.

LoCicero works with collage and oil paint. He explores flowers in vases, as he shapes each petal from wall paper, musical scores, journals, children's drawings, historical documents, love letters, famous novels, or old children's books. With paint and collage, LoCicero's art enters the world of Symbolism where the real is realistically presented, but the content is shrouded in mystery. Thus, within the beauty of the petals made from printed papers from the past, LoCicero revives nostalgia and awakens the mind to forgotten thoughts of childhood. He meticulously shapes the collaged flowers and places them in an elegantly painted, highly detailed urn, having an exotic motif. LoCicero then locates his still life within a regal setting replete with base and background. "Wallpaper Tulips" is beautifully designed terracotta, cream, and navy colored vase intricately rendered. The flowers placed in the container are made from carefully cut and arranged pieces of wallpaper, of delicate colors that, when assembled, appear like tulips. "Flowered Tom and Jerry" is deceptive too. Delightful Spring flowers are set in an ornately detailed vase, but upon



Patrick LoCicero, "Dogwood Dairy," 32" x 32" oil on canvas with collage, 2007. Photo courtesy of SGFA.

closer inspection, the flowers are cartoon pictures of cats and mice, the artist's childhood recollections. To maximize the motif and heighten the mystery, LoCicero places the objects in a flat, narrowly confined space where the tight focus leads to the enigmatic symbols within the petals and their surroundings.

Brigham and LoCicero complement each others' art. Both work with themes based on of natural objects. Their art

is technically skillful, sensitive, and conveys a mystical aura of serenity.

Meet the artists and see the art from 6 to 9 p.m. during today's First Thursday Art Walk. Visit Sue Greenwood Fine Art is at 330 N. Coast Hwy., 949-494-0669 or online at [www.suegreenwoodfineart.com](http://www.suegreenwoodfineart.com).

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